

Library Opens

On May 31, the Sha'ar Zahav library will be officially opened for use. Though small, our library includes such important works as a complete set of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, a gift in memory of Ted Mendonca from his lover, Richard Inlander, and his friends; the multi-volume Soncino English-Hebrew Talmud; and such important single-volume works as *Jewish and Feminine* by Susan Schneider as well as *Back to the Sources. Commentary, Tikkun, and Journal of Reformed Judaism* are among the magazines available to read at the library. Thanks to Rabbi Kahn, the library will be receiving the *Jerusalem Post*. Also available at the library will be the latest newsletters from our sibling congregations in the World Congress.

The opening of the library is a milestone in the progress of our congregation. So many people have helped to bring this about through their generous contributions of time, effort, money and book donations. We cannot list all the people that brought this library into being, but to all of you a wonderful thanks.

Extended to all members is an invitation to browse through our newest treasure, our library—perhaps after the Congregational Meeting.

Women's Conference

May 15-17
Camp Swig
Saratoga

Call Betty Kalis for info
221-2265

Congregational Meeting

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav will hold its Congregational Meeting at 4 pm on Sunday, May 31. The Congregation will vote on a number of important items, including the adoption of a budget for 1987/88 and the election of officers and five board members.

The Congregation will also consider and vote on amendments to the Bylaws, which would change the number of congregational meetings from two to one a year, and would change the requirement for dates of Candidates' Nights. Details regarding candidates for office and issues to be considered will be included in a spe-

cial mailing to be sent to all CSZ members prior to the meeting.

At the meeting, the Congregation will also hear reports from the Rabbi, the President, Treasurer and Committees on their accomplishments and future activities. (Only members whose dues are paid up-to-date are entitled to vote. As usual, the Treasurer will assist those members needing to make arrangements for their dues payments.) So, plan to attend this vital decision-making event.

Shavu'ot: Study, Celebrate, and Eat

Shavu'ot, the spring harvest festival which commemorates the giving of the Torah, falls on Tuesday night, June 2. Our observance will begin with a catered dairy dinner at 6:30 pm. A special festival service will follow, starting at 7:45.

Because Shavu'ot celebrates the receiving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, it is traditional to spend the entire night of Shavu'ot in study. At midnight, it is said, participants in study can look up to the sky and see into heaven itself. The synagogue makes no promises, but our *tikkun* (study session) will begin at 9 and continue through the night (well, past midnight at least!) with frequent breaks for music and dessert.

You are welcome to participate in the entire evening's activities or any part you like. Reservations for dinner (approx. \$5) are required; RSVP to the synagogue office.

Election Slate Announced

At the Congregational Meeting on Sunday, May 31, CSZ members will vote to elect officers for the coming year, and five Members-at-Large of the Va'ad to serve 2-year terms. Standing for election are Richard Inlander for president, Irene Ogus for vice president, Eric Keitel for treasurer and Ben Schalit for a second term as recorder.

Running for the five Va'ad seats becoming vacant at the end of June are Tiela Chalmers, Ralph Frischman, Betty Kalis, Garry Koenigsberg, Robin Leonard, Alita Rosenfeld and David Stein.

All members will be mailed information on each of the candidates, as well as details regarding absentee ballots. Everyone will also have a chance to meet and question the candidates at two Candidates Nights at the shul, Friday, May 8 and May 29, following services and Oneg Shabbat.

Installation of officers and new Va'ad members is scheduled for Friday evening, June 19.

He's Dancing As Fast As He Can

What happens when a part-time Rabbi becomes a full-time Rabbi? On July 1, Rabbi Kahn begins his new two-year, full-time contract with us. During the past two years the leadership and the Rabbi have performed a sometimes delicate *pas de deux* around his role in the areas of education, service leadership, Bikkur Cholim and his involvement with outside organizations. He has tried to serve our needs as best he can, but with the pervasive and dreadful AIDS crisis taking priority over everything, it has often been necessary for him to change his schedule to make a hospital visit or perform a funeral. Sadly, this situation is unlikely to change soon.

Our membership just hit 320, education classes are well-attended, many members are interested in studying for Bat and Bar Mitzvah, and an ever-growing number want to know what we are going to offer their children in the way of Jewish education.

The nationwide reputation that both the congregation and Rabbi Kahn have established is one of vibrancy, caring, intelligence and a passion for justice. With this comes responsibility. Invitations arrive almost daily for him to speak, appear, write, serve on committees and boards.

We are happy with Rabbi Kahn. He and I have often commented on his position with us as the perfect "shidduch." He is impatient, demanding, curious and ambitious. He also seems to possess more than his share of gentleness and kindness. As someone who experienced his help in times of trouble, I know the caring he can offer. Rabbi Kahn is a mirror of our synagogue—not quite perfect but trying damn hard.

—Irene Ogus

Remember to keep us up to date. If you've moved, changed your name, have a new phone number, or wish to add a listing to our *yahrzeit* or anniversary records, please call or write the synagogue office.

COMING NEXT TO THEATRE RHINOCEROS

WHAT'S A MOTHER TO DO?

by Michael Zimmerman

So he's a little... What's a mother to do? When two Jewish mothers matchmake for their sons, there's bound to be surprises for all. This farce about Gay men and their mothers, set in a Fort Lauderdale condominium, is our answer to *Miami Vice*.

So nu...enjoy a little.

Opens April 25

Classified Ads

SEEKING PICTURES of our past for 10th anniversary display in the library. Especially interested in pictures of early period before we moved into our own building. We need pictures of former officers, members, congregational events and places where the congregation met. Pictures will be returned to owners. Contact: Mark Mackler, 863-6319.

APARTMENT TO SHARE: Gay-Jewish man and his dog will be moving in to a 3 BR, 2 Bath apt in Presidio Heights, June 1. Looking for one person to share space who can enjoy a warm, comfortable home. Rent \$600/mo. One-year minimum commitment. Phone David or leave a message at 567-7654.

The Jewish Gaily Forward is published 11 times annually by Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, 220 Danvers at Caselli, San Francisco, California 94114, (415) 861-6932. Permission to reproduce non-copyrighted material is freely given, and credit would be appreciated.

Members of the Congregation receive the *Forward*. For a donation of \$12/year, non-members will receive the *Forward*.

All newsletter copy should be typed, double-spaced and is due no later than the date of the Va'ad meeting. It should be sent to the synagogue office, marked to the attention of the *Forward*.

Members of the Newsletter Committee are Bob Goldware (Articles Coordinator), Jay Feinstein (Advertising Coordinator), Allan Altman, Alex Ingersoll, Garry Koenigsberg, Alita Rosenfeld and David Stein (general editorial and production); Amy Blasenheim (photos); Frank Hyman, Chuck Norton, Ben Schalit, Sam Thal and Eli Weinstein (distribution). The *Forward* is typeset by David Lester, Pagesetter Typography.

Display Ads are \$15 per column inch for non-members and \$10 per column inch for members, with discounts available for size and frequency. Contact Jay Feinstein (621-7152) for specific rates. Ads should be camera ready; any ads that require typesetting, camera and/or artwork will be subject to a one-time production charge.

Classified Ads are \$5.00 for up to 20 words, plus \$1.00 for each 10 additional words.

Payment must accompany ad and should be sent to Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, 220 Danvers at Caselli, San Francisco, California 94114, marked attention *Forward* advertising. The advertising deadline is the 10th of the month. The *Forward* reserves the right to reject any ad for reasons of taste. For more information on advertising rates and charges, call the synagogue office at 861-6932.

Proposed Building Assessment Program

In the past few years, our congregation has grown amazingly: from a struggling group with rented space and no Rabbi, to a leading synagogue in our community and the Reform movement. This growth challenges both our leadership and our membership as a whole.

Sha'ar Zahav must begin to address issues of long term stability and growth. Through counsel with other congregational leaders, we are learning how. Our building, in particular, is one of our anchors for the future, and we must protect it for ourselves, and for those who will follow us as members of our congregation. We cannot let it fall into disrepair; we must continue the process of making it a comfortable environment; and we must plan for the possibility of its future sale and replacement. These requirements can be dealt with only by thoughtful planning.

These are some of the facts we are facing: we need a new roof; our mortgage is still being paid; in an old building, maintenance and repair are ongoing. We can continue to pay for these items from the general fund, but that diminishes our ability to pay for programs and staffing. We must begin deciding how to fill our economic needs, both from dues and in the form

of a building assessment.

At the Congregational Meeting on Sunday, May 31, members will be asked to vote on a proposed building assessment of \$30 per year for each adult wage earner, billed annually on January 1.

As we grow, we take on new responsibilities for our future. This is a difficult issue, but one critical to our future. We look forward to a full and open discussion on May 31.

—Don Albert, Chair, Finance Committee

10th Anniversary Gala

Saturday, August 8
8:00 pm

Green Room
War Memorial Opera House
San Francisco

Israel Expo

On Sunday, May 31, Sha'ar Zahav will participate in Israel Expo, an all-day celebration on Pier 3 at Fort Mason in San Francisco. Organizers expect 10,000 people to attend. This year's Expo commemorates the 39th anniversary of Israel's independence and the 20th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem.

CSZ's participation will consist of an information booth staffed by the Membership Committee. As in the past, this year's Expo will provide us with an excellent opportunity to educate the Jewish community on lesbian and gay issues. We will hand out newsletters, brochures, flyers and membership applications, answer questions, and talk up the synagogue.

Although the Israel Expo is the same day as this year's annual meeting, the Expo runs from 10 to 5 while the Congregational Meeting doesn't begin until 4 pm. Everyone is encouraged to attend the Israel Expo; but remember to leave early, in time to attend the Congregational Meeting. If you would like to help staff the synagogue's booth, please call Robin Leonard at 386-7876.

Lag B'Omer Barbecue and Game Night

FOUND: Large barbecue grill brimming with glowing coals and tables laden with potato salad and cole slaw.

LOST: All men looking for the CSZ Men's Club potluck barbecue and game night.

Please join hosts Allan Gold, David Gass and Steve Elman on Sunday, May 17, 5-9 pm at 424 Central Ave. in San Francisco. Bring whatever you would like to throw on the grill, a beverage and your favorite game (board, card or otherwise). We will eat (of course), schmooze, game and get to know one another as the sun sets casually in the West. Call 929-9524 or 567-7654 to let us know you're coming, get directions or ask any questions. See you there.

From the Treasurer

Last month, all members were asked to please cooperate and complete their last quarter's dues payments. We hope the response will be satisfactory.

About 40% of our members still owe 20% of the total dues which were pledged. The unpaid percentage is higher than we had counted on.

We would much appreciate everyone's best effort. If for any reason there is a problem, write or call the Treasurer (921-0581)—we would prefer not having to call you.

The services CSZ provides get better all the time—only your timely support makes this possible. Thank you.

—Jerry Rosenstein,
Lame Duck Treasurer

HOLOCAUST FAMILY ALBUM

Tuesday, May 12
7:30 pm

Congregation
Sha'ar Zahav

Karin Wandrei
Marta Wohl
present

a program on
the experiences of children,
and especially gay children,
of Holocaust survivors

Sponsored by the
Education Committee

Please,

don't forget our brothers and sisters in need. Keep filling the shul's collection baskets with non-perishable food and other household items for the SF AIDS Foundation's residence program.

A Sheaf of Days

The period between Passover and Shavu'ot is called the Omer. Literally, Omer means a "measure" or "sheaf" of grain. The Omer offering was brought to the Temple on the second day of Passover, the first day of the spring barley harvest. From this date, the Torah instructs us to count for a period of seven weeks. On the fiftieth day, another offering of grain is brought, marking the holiday of Shavu'ot. Shavu'ot means "weeks," a reference to the seven weeks between Passover and Shavu'ot.

While purely an agricultural festival in origin, Shavu'ot gradually became more and more firmly associated with the revelation of the Torah at Sinai. It is the connection of the liberation from Egypt to the gift of revelation at Sinai which the Omer today signifies. The liberation from Egypt was not itself the ultimate event; rather, it was the prelude to the transformation of the people into a holy nation. The rabbis interpreted the counting of the days until the revelation at Sinai as a sign of the people's excited anticipation. Instead of a "countdown," Jews look forward by "counting-up." Accordingly, at Sha'ar Zahav we will be numbering the days until Shavu'ot at each Friday night service this month.

We each have our personal journeys, our own forms of enslavement and liberation, our own revelations and our own promised lands. When we anticipate a special day in our own per-

sonal life, we often count the days leading up to it. Similarly, we count the days in the life of our people, in times past and present. Our careful attention to counting the Omer also recalls for us our ancestors' connection to the soil and dependence on its fertility.

The counting of the Omer, which we have not done previously at Sha'ar Zahav, is part of our effort to bring the rhythms of the Jewish calendar to the life of our congregation. Jewish holidays never spring abruptly onto the horizon; their arrival is always announced by earlier special days. The High Holidays, for example, are foreshadowed by Selichot and the month of Elul; Tisha b'Av, by Shabbat Chazon and the following shabbats of warning; and Shavu'ot by the counting of the Omer. The domination of our lives by the secular and Christian religious calendars can, in some measure, be balanced by closer attention to, and harmony with, the ebb and flow of Jewish time.

The Omer period culminates on Shavu'ot, which this year falls on Tuesday evening, June 2. In order to make participation easier for as many members as possible, a catered dinner will be served. (See separate article.) It is the custom on Shavu'ot to spend (almost) the whole night in study. Following dinner and a festival service, our Shavu'ot *tikkun* will run from about 9 until midnight. Study will be

mixed with music, noshing and fun. You need not stay for the entire evening; please come for as much as you are able.

* * *

Several people rightfully objected that my review of Bay Area-published Jewish periodicals overlooked *Shmate*, an idiosyncratic "Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought." *Shmate* is published and edited in Berkeley by Steve Fankuchen and prints a variety of Bay Area writers, including Mike Rankin. (\$15/yr; 3/4 issues/yr; Box 4228, Berkeley, CA 94704). My belated apologies for the oversight.

—Rabbi Yoel Kahn

Naches

Congratulations to **Dan Bellm** on his recent cover article in *Mother Jones*, a carefully researched study of a national chain of child-care centers.

* * *

We'd all like to share in the *naches* of members of our Sha'ar Zahav family. If you or someone you know has something special to share with *Forward* readers, please contact the synagogue office.

New Members

The Membership Committee is pleased to announce that our congregation gained several new members in April. A warm welcome to the latest people to join our family, including:

Ann B.

Aaron Frankel & David Nahmod
Francie Hornstein, Ellen Peskin, Jesse & Sam

Deborah Jacobs & Joel Levine
Sunny Schwartz

New members are welcomed and honored at Friday night services on the last Friday of the month. By making them feel a part of our family, we can all help to show our new members that they have a valuable place at Sha'ar Zahav.

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| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | | | | 2 Iyar 1 3 2 Services, 8:15pm | |
| 4 3 | 5 4 Education Comm. 7:30pm | 6 5 Newsletter Comm. 140 Ord, 7:30pm | 7 6 | 8 7 | 9 8 Services, 8:15pm | 10 9 |
| 11 10 | 12 11 Va'ad Meeting, 6:30pm Newsletter Deadline | 13 12 Holocaust Family Album program, K. Wandrei & M. Wohl, 7:30pm | 14 13 Soviet Vigil Green & Baker, 11:30 am | 15 14 Social Action Comm. 7:30pm | 16 15 Services, 8:15pm Women's Conference at Camp Swig | 17 16 Women's Conference |
| 18 17 Lag B'Omer Women's Conference Men's Barbecue, 424 Central Ave., 5-9pm | 19 18 | 20 19 | 21 20 | 22 21 Bikkur Cholim Comm. 7:30pm | 23 22 Services, 8:15pm | 24 23 |
| 25 24 | 26 25 Office closed Memorial Day | 27 26 | 28 27 | 29 28 Ritual Comm., 6:30pm Newsletter Mailing 11 Grandview Terr. 7:30pm | 1 Sivan 29 Rosh Chodesh Services 8:15pm | 2 30 Morning Service, 10:30am |
| 3 31 Israel Expo Fort Mason, 10-5 Congregational Meeting & Elections, 4pm | | | | | | |

Ritual Calendar

Friday, May 1

Parshot: Tazria-Metzora
Mike Rankin

Friday, May 8

Parshot: Acharei Mot-Kedoshim
Tiela Chalmers

Friday, May 15

Parsha: Emor
Daniel Chesir & Paul Cohen

Friday, May 22

Parshot: Behar-Bechukotai
Rabbi Yoel Kahn & Eric Keitel
The Torah will be read

Friday, May 29

Parsha: Bamidbar
Rabbi Yoel Kahn

Saturday, May 30

Morning Service, 10:30 am
Rabbi Yoel Kahn

Tuesday, June 2

Shavu'ot Evening Service, 7:45
Dinner 6:30, Study Session 9:00
Ritual Committee & friends

Friday, June 5

Parsha: Naso
Tiela Chalmers & Steve Greenberg

Calendar For 5747

June 1987

2 Erev Shavu'ot Service & Potluck
19 Installation of Officers
21 Women's Havurah
Solstice Pool Party
28 Parade

July 1987

2-5 10th International Conference of
Gay & Lesbian Jews, Amsterdam

August 1987

4 Tisha B'av
8 10th Anniversary Gala

September 1987

23 Erev Rosh Hashanah
(10/2—Kol Nidre)

Va'ad Report

The Va'ad convened its April meeting on Monday the 6th. President Irene Ogus called the meeting to order and asked Past President Leila Raim to report on the upcoming Women's Conference at Camp Swig, which is planned to include 18 workshops, a sports program, and a dance party. Up to 140 CSZ members, non-members and their children are expected to participate. Don Albert, another CSZ Past President, volunteered to coordinate a conference for the men of the congregation, and received a round of applause.

In his *D'var Torah*, Rabbi Kahn discussed the tension between the freedom that we have in our lives and the freedom we don't yet have. During Passover we celebrate freedom, and the very act of celebrating freedom itself helps to make us free. In addition to his written report, Rabbi Kahn described a Jewish chaplaincy program, which would make it possible for hospitalized Jews to be visited by a rabbi on a regular basis.

Office Manager Jacqueline Letalien expressed gratitude for the soon-to-be-introduced synagogue computer. Irene reported that the computer has been selected and will be purchased shortly.

The Va'ad voted unanimously to approve the revised 1987/88 budget. Finance Committee chair Don Albert thanked Jerry Rosenstein, whose time, research and computer expertise made this year's smooth budget process possible.

The Va'ad discussed Endowment Fund bylaws proposed by the Finance Committee. Several issues were identified regarding the legal, structural, and organizational aspects of the proposed Endowment Fund. Bylaws Committee chair Richard Inlander will convene a meeting to consider possible bylaw amendments towards establishing an Endowment Fund.

Membership Committee chair Robin Leonard presented six new membership applications, including three for family memberships, all unanimously approved.

Sha'ar Zahav will have an information booth at this year's Gay/Lesbian Freedom Day celebration. Dates were set for special Friday evening services for the installation of newly elected officers and board members, for Gay/Lesbian Freedom Day, and for Sha'ar Zahav's Tenth Anniversary.

UAHC Liaison Mike Rankin reported on a presentation he made at Brandeis University, and told the Va'ad of Sha'ar Zahav's widespread and positive reputation. Mike asked for suggestions for resolutions to be brought to the national biennial convention of the UAHC, which will take place this fall in Chicago.

All of Sha'ar Zahav's members are welcome to attend meetings of the Va'ad. Those present at the end of such productive meetings as this one also join in the customary singing of *Oseh Shalom*. We'll see you there!

—Ben Schalit, Recorder

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It's a great way to celebrate a special occasion.

Contributions

Sha'ar Zahav welcomes all contributions, of all sizes, to mark any event, and to any of our funds. Contributions will be acknowledged in the *Forward* unless requested otherwise.

Donations were made to Sha'ar Zahav's funds in the past months by the following contributors:

Education Fund

Malke Singer & Karen Fierer, in honor of Mischa Aaron Singer-Fierer
Sharyn Saslafsky, in honor of her niece Ali and mazel tov to Ali's parents Stephen & Joyce, and Baube Esther

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Gordon Osser

Jay Ladin & Christine Benvenuto, in memory of Dan Pagis

AIDS Fund

Gordon Osser, in memory of Kurt Stutzman

General Fund

Bernard Pechter, in honor of Alex Ingersoll's 40th birthday

Eugene & Ruth Oscherwitz, in honor of Jon Oscherwitz

Cheryl Orvis, mazel tov to Catherine & Leila on their new home, Paul Cohen & Bob Gutterman on their new home; Mike Rankin on his selection as UAHC Regional Vice President; in honor of Isabelle Fishman's 90th birthday

Building Fund

Allan Berenstein

Ed Piretti & Allan Berenstein, in honor of the birth of Ali Saslafsky

Torah Fund

Betty Kalis, in honor of Isabelle Fishman's 90th birthday

Social Action Fund

Nanci Stern



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Yahrzeits

- 1 Benjamin Katz, grandfather of Bruce Katz
- 1 (2 Iyar) Dora Fox Solomon, grandmother of Elliott Toporek
- 11 (12 Iyar) Abe Schorr, father of Cynthia Schorr
- 12 Jack Fleming, brother-in-law of Gordon Osser
- 13 Miriam Dreskin, mother-in-law of Barry Siegel
- 14 Harold Leben, uncle of Rob Tat
- 14 (15 Iyar) Harry Skolnik, grandfather of Hal Heller
- 16 (17 Iyar) Frances Raim, mother of Leila Raim
- 17 (18 Iyar) Jane Rauch, friend of David Lambert
- 18 Jack Cohen, grandfather of Jay Cohen
- 18 Blair Isrow, cousin of Steven Cronenwalt
- 19 Hyman Feinstein, father of Jay Feinstein
- 19 Joan Icke, mother of Cindy Icke
- 20 Marika Chill, mother of Yo Schneeman
- 21 Marvin Saslafsky, father of Sharyn Saslafsky
- 23 (24 Iyar) Goldie Markson Rosen, mother of Barry Rosen
- 24 Patrick Whalen, friend of Paul Wotman
- 26 (27 Iyar) Rachel Koshover, grandmother of Sherie Ann Koshover
- 26 (27 Iyar) Max Podgur, father of Hal Podgur
- 26 Ida Parker, mother of Harold Parker
- 29 Rose Jacobstein, aunt of Betty Kalis
- 30 Steven Koenigsberg, friend of Don Albert
- 30 Mary Thal, mother of Sam Thal
- 31 (3 Sivan) Saul Prochovnick, grandfather of Ora Prochovnick

Note: Yahrzeits will be read at services on the Friday *preceding* the Yahrzeit date.

☐ ☒ ☐

VOTE!
May 31, 4 pm
At the Synagogue



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Landmark Seder

Another milestone in the growth and maturity of our congregation took place on the second night of Passover, April 14, at Lehr's Greenhouse Restaurant. Over 230 people gathered at our Seder: people of all different ages, all the wonderful variety of singles, couples, families and children that make up our community. How we have grown!

The change in location was judged a resounding success. Chef Randy Lehr received a round of applause for his culinary efforts, and although we spread into two rooms, the pleasant atmosphere and good company kept things remarkably *haimish*. The Seder ritual itself, specially re-adapted this year by our Ritual Committee, provided opportunity for individual discussion of the questions of Passover as well as unified participation in the traditional rituals. And the songs at the very end got the traditional Sha'ar Zahav treatment.

As usual, many people deserve our thanks. To Garry Koenigsberg, who located the restaurant and negotiated the pricing; to Jonathan Schwartz, who

organized the Charoses Chavurah of ritual-food makers; to Shirley Liberman, who organized reservations and tied up lots of loose ends; to Frank Hyman, who schlepped; and to Tiela Chalmers, Rena Frantz, Steve Elman, Susan Greenspan, and everyone else who pitched in and helped (we always wind up forgetting someone)—our thanks and *yash'koach*, for a job well done.

Along with our satisfaction in the memorable Seder we shared come some difficult questions. If last year we saw 150 attendees, and this year 230, what will next year bring? How large can our Seder get and still feel like a family affair? At the Seder and beyond it, how can we continue to grow and still stay together?

While there are no easy answers, two points are clear. We can expect to consider and resolve these problems just as we have managed to solve the different problems that have faced us in the past. And, as Aunt Yente might say, so all synagogues should have such problems!

So Ask Aunt Yente

Dear Aunt Yente,

Since I've been visiting Israel, everyone seems to be talking about the question of "Who is a Jew." Apparently, some people want to make Israel's law of return stricter about who is a Jew and can immigrate to Israel. Does Aunt Yente have an opinion?

Curious on the Qibbutz

Dear Curious,

Aunt Yente wonders when did so many of her kinderlach buy Jacuzzi's, that every month they should invite her to jump into hot water. What do you think Aunt Yente is, a matzoh ball? But on the other hand, her regular mikvoh has been a little dull lately. So as long as Aunt Yente's jumping, why not make things hot enough to be interesting?

On the law of return, Aunt Yente thinks that the whole argument is a bad one—as the Talmud would say, an argument not for the sake of heaven. Because why? Because a law which treats one religion different from others is as wrong in Israel as it is in Russia. The question should not be, who is a Jew to immigrate, but, *takke*, can there be a law in the first place which makes a difference between Jews and non-Jews. The Torah says "There should be one law for you and for the stranger." Also Hillel said that

to increase peace, you must increase justice. Aunt Yente prays every day there should be peace for Jerusalem; but she thinks this will happen only when all people are equal there, in the law of return and everything else.

So now Aunt Yente is feeling *lebedik* from her nice hot plunge, let her begin to answer your question. But to answer who is a Jew she still needs to know, who's asking? By the Orthodox, someone is a Jew who was either born Jewish or who was converted with approval by three Orthodox rabbis. By the Reform, it is the same, except the rabbis could be either Orthodox or Reform. Now some Orthodox want only people converted by Orthodox rabbis to count as Jews, because a Reform rabbi is not *takke* a rabbi. (We can quickly leave this *naarishkeit* aside. True, Reform rabbis don't always have such nice beards as Orthodox; but deep as the tie is between facial hair and spirituality, neither Reform nor Orthodox have a monopoly on wise and upright rabbis. Neither has a monopoly on the other kind, either.)

So all Jews agree that someone who converts to Judaism is at least the same "amount" Jewish as someone who is born a Jew. But who is born a Jew? Is one Jewish parent enough? Is a

grandparent enough? The traditional answer is to look at the mother. If the mother is Jewish, so the child is Jewish. If the mother had a Jewish mother, then she is Jewish and the child is Jewish.

This is very different from other Jewish laws about inheritance, which look mostly at the father. Property is usually inherited through the males, and the full special status of "Cohanim," priests, and "Leviyim," Levites, also comes through the father. So why is the most basic inheritance, that of being Jewish, inherited through the mother? Is this an early example of Jewish feminist consciousness?

Well, no. Mama, in traditional Judaism, is in charge of home, cooking, raising children, and so forth. This did give her some power—she was supposed to have the last word as to such matters—but since control of everything else went to the man, feminist Aunt Yente is not going to call it; the word in her mind is more like "stereotype." Anyway, the reason for the rule, that you are Jewish if you have a Yiddishe mama, is that children learn first from their mother, who is the person they see most (in a nice stereotyped family life) in their important early years. This is very interesting to your Aunt Yente, because it means that being Jewish is not just being born with a pedigree (if just a pedigree, it could come from the father), but looks to what you are taught, what you understand, how you act.

So about five years ago, the Reform people took this one step further. They said that who is born a Jew depends on two things: if you had a Jewish parent (either a father or mother), and if you act like a Jew, by identifying yourself with Yiddishkeit. Although this *zehr* different from the traditional rule, it is exactly the same logic. It realizes that mamas and papas today aren't as predictable as to who takes care of the kinderlach, and it looks to the same question—is the child developing a Jewish identity—but looks for it explicitly, not just figuring it has to be there because of mama.

So now is a real split between Reform and Orthodox—not just that
(Continued on next page)

Let's meet in Amsterdam
at the
**10th International Conference
of Gay and Lesbian Jews**
July 2-5

Co-sponsored by Sjalhomo and the
World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations

For information & registration packets, write to:

World Congress
P.O. Box 881272
San Francisco, CA 94188

Travel package, including Israel tour, also available

Aunt Yente

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the Orthodox don't like Reform conversions, but two different rules on who is Jewish without conversion. But before Aunt Yente glues down her *sheitle* to jump into the fight, let her ask what we are worried about. Forget for a minute *who* is Jewish—*what* does it mean Jewish? A Jew must follow the Torah, which (according to Hillel) is all commentary on the basic rule to treat other people like you want to be treated; are there no non-Jews who try to do this? We are taught that a Jew can have a share in the world to come; but we are taught that non-Jews also can. A Jew must engage in *tikkun olom*, the healing of all things, but again we have no monopoly. Even the special holiness that comes from eating matzoh bry and potato knishes Aunt Yente suspects there may be non-Jews who share.

When Aunt Yente at her Seder acknowledges her responsibility to feed the hungry, in language that her people have said for two thousand years; or when she finally stumbles onto the logic of a *shtikle* Talmud; or when she whispers to herself the blessing for seeing mountains; or when she lights the Shabbos candles, or gives *tsedaka*, or *gedempts* a brisket—so she is sorry for the people who have not known this, or who have tossed it aside. But she is also willing to share all of it (except maybe her secret brisket recipe) with anyone who will accept all of it—who will share responsibility for *tikkun olam* along with the ceremony and the learning and the food. On this, Aunt Yente agrees with what that nice boy Ben Gurion used to say. If you're *mishuga* enough to want to say that you're Jewish, so *nebbech* you're Jewish.

Aunt Yente

Aunt Yente will answer all your questions about Jewish law and ritual matters. Just write to Aunt Yente in care of the *Forward*, 220 Danvers at Caselli, San Francisco, CA 94114. All material Copyright © 1987 Congregation Sha'ar Zahav.

MEMBERSHIP
feels good

Isabelle Turns Ninety

Several years ago, Isabelle Fishman, only recently arrived in San Francisco from the "old country" (Brooklyn), was visiting her good friend Rose Stolowitz at Menorah Park. It was Rosh Hashanah, and we were holding High Holy Day services in the Jewish Community Center in those days. Isabelle and Rose wandered in, loved the services and us, and have been strong supporters and wonderful

friends of Sha'ar Zahav ever since.

On March 19, Isabelle was 90 years old. And on March 20, the congregation honored her at Shabbat service. Isabelle in turn has honored us with a poem about Sha'ar Zahav; she read it to the congregation after she lit the candles and said the blessing.

Mazel tov, Isabelle, and thank you. May you live to a hundred and twenty (at least!).

Sha'ar Zahav

*When first I went to Sha'ar Zahav
I found to my surprise,
A type of Friday night service
That opened up my eyes.*

*It started by everyone rising,
Putting arms around each other's waists,
And singing "Oseh Shalom Bim Romav"
Swaying gently and not making haste.*

*It was a warming experience,
How could anyone feel strange,
When their neighbors had just been
hugging them
Within their own arms' range.*

*We went through the regular Service
With responsive reading and singing,
Partly in English with lots of Hebrew,
That set the walls a-ringing.*

*Much of it was informal
With lay members taking part,
Whatever it lacked in formality
Was more than made up for in "heart."*

*The Oneg Shabbat after Services
Was really very good.
First they made the Kiddush,
Then went to town on the food.*

*Whether you're "straight" or
whether you're "gay"
Believe me, you need have no fear,
For you cannot escape the feeling
That you are welcome here!*

—Isabelle Fishman
March, 1987

Sha'ar Zahav Funds

Sha'ar Zahav's health is founded on a good spiritual and fiscal base. The Finance Committee wishes to remind all members and friends of the congregation of the various funds that are available for your support. Any reason is a good reason for contributions: a birthday, anniversary, *yahrzeit*, *simcha*, etc., etc. You may specify which fund your gift is to be dedicated to. Our funds are:

The General Fund: underwrite the ongoing activities and committee programs of the congregation.

The Building Fund: mortgage payments and building improvements.

The Education Fund: cover the costs of teachers for classes, books and

learning materials, film programs, lecturer stipends, etc.

The Harvey Milk Social Action Fund: contributions to social causes that the synagogue wishes to lend support to—for example, aid to Ethiopian Jewry, Soviet Jewry, and San Francisco Jewish Family and Children's Services.

The Library Fund: development of a reference library for our congregation.

The AIDS Fund: assistance of members and friends diagnosed with AIDS and support of AIDS-related educational and humanitarian projects in our community.

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Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

220 DANVERS AT CASELLI, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94114

שַׁעַר זָהָב

(415) 861-6932

Rabbi Yoel Kahn

Officers:

President, Irene Ogus
Vice President, Richard Inlander
Treasurer, Jerry Rosenstein
Recorder, Ben Schalit

Va'ad (Board) Members:

Jay Feinstein
Robert Goldware
Eric Keitel
Allyce Kimerling
Garry Koenigsberg
Ellen Kugler
Shirley Liberman
Mike Rankin
Susan Talley
Don Albert, ex officio

Services are held every Friday evening beginning at 8:15 pm, with an Oneg Shabbat following services. Services are generally held on the last Saturday of each month at 10:30 am—check calendar for each month.

Committee Chairs:

Bikkur Cholim, Paul Cohen
Brotherhood, by committee
Building, David Gellman
Bylaws, Richard Inlander
Children's Havurah, Sue Douglass & Jill Rose
Education, Bill Goldstein
Finance, Don Albert
Membership, Robin Leonard
Newsletter, Alex Ingersoll
Oneg, Bill Ashley-Dobbin & Lawney Baldwin
Past Presidents Council, Cheryl Orvis
Public Relations, Sharyn Saslafsky & Andy Zimmerman
Ritual, Daniel Chesir
Social Action, Ami Zusman
Social Program, Shirley Liberman
Women's Havurah, Marion Trentman

Data Managers:

Alita Rosenfeld
Jerry Rosenstein

Office Manager:

Jacqueline Letalien

The Synagogue Office is open Monday through Friday, 8 am to 2:30 pm. At other times, please leave a phone message.

Emergency Number: In an emergency, the Congregation can be contacted outside of office hours by calling 420-9718.

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav (Congregation of the Golden Gate) is located in the Upper Market District of San Francisco at 220 Danvers at Caselli, which is one block south of the intersection of 18th & Market streets. By public transport, take MUNI bus 33 Ashbury to 18th & Danvers and walk one block south on Danvers to Caselli.

Member Union of American Hebrew Congregations and World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations.

Oneg Sponsors

During March, onegs were sponsored by the following generous people:

- 6 Allan Berenstein, in honor of the Congregation
- 13 Membership Committee, in honor of Michael McCormick's conversion
- 20 Bikkur Cholim Committee, in honor of the Sha'ar Zahav volunteers at the Jewish Home for the Aged

All you have to do to sponsor an oneg is to think of the occasion and contact the synagogue office (861-6932). The cost of sponsoring a complete oneg is \$80 or, for partial sponsorship, \$50. You can also provide the food, flowers, etc. for a more personal touch.

Birthdays

- 1 Avner Lapovsky
- 2 Allan Altman
- 2 Rena Frantz
- 3 Marion Trentman
- 4 Don Eiten
- 6 Joyce Amburgey
- 8 Stephanie Hannaford
- 10 Lawney Baldwin
- 11 Mirtha Beal
- 15 Alison Loebel
- 16 Ron Shore
- 16 Ed Tanovitz
- 17 Ed Gabay
- 17 Janice Macomber
- 18 Carol Cohen
- 18 Jane Graeven
- 18 David Stein
- 21 Jerry Rosenstein
- 28 Sherie Ann Koshover
- 29 Marilyn Kalman
- 29 Eric Keitel

Funds

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The Prayer Book Fund: underwrite the costs of writing, revising and publishing our prayerbooks.

The Rabbi's Discretionary Fund: supports *tzedakah* and special needs in the congregation and the community.

The Torah Fund: purchase of a new torah and adornments for our congregation.

Contributions are acknowledged by letter and in the *Forward*, and the person being honored also receives a card announcing the gift. All donations to Sha'ar Zahav are tax deductible.

